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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TEL AVIV 004538

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [ECON](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [IS](#) [ISRAELI](#) [SOCIETY](#)

SUBJECT: ISRAELI ARABS: GOI NOT AT FAULT FOR ALL PROBLEMS

REF: TEL AVIV 4066

Classified By: Deputy Chief of Mission Gene A. Cretz for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

1. (C) SUMMARY: Leaders in Israel's Bedouin and Israeli-Arab communities acknowledge that not all of their problems can be blamed on government policies and programs. Leadership and good governance are needed within these communities if they are to overcome current and future challenges. END SUMMARY.

A DAY WITH THE BEDOUIN

2. (C) Econoff toured Bedouin villages, a Bedouin high school, a Bedouin women's association and three mosques under threat of demolition by the GOI on July 13. This visit and subsequent discussions with Israeli-Arab activists from the Negev and Galilee shed light on the growing problems in these regions, which Bedouin and Israeli-Arab representatives said are attributable in no small part to corruption, lack of leadership and "internal oppression."

3. (C) Faisal Sawalha of the Regional Council for the Arab Unrecognized Villages in the Negev accompanied econoff on a tour of five Bedouin villages. Sawalha said there are many problems in the Bedouin community and that the GOI cannot be blamed for all of them. He said the dismal education system is one such problem, a failure on the part of the Bedouin.

4. (C) In Rahat, a recognized Bedouin village, econoff visited the Al-Noor high school, which serves 700 students in grades nine through twelve. The school is operated by 45 Israeli-Arab teachers. Sawalha said most of the students do not pass national exams such as the "Bagrut." He said only 40 percent of seniors pass the high school exit exam, a generous figure which does not reflect the reality that only ten percent of those students make it to university and only two or three percent earn a degree, he said.

5. (C) Sawalha touched on the quality of teachers and administrators, pointing to a lack of qualifications and favoritism. He said certain positions in the Bedouin school system are filled with individuals who do not deserve them. The deputy principal at Rahat was hired in this way, said Sawalha, noting that the deputy principal only had a high school diploma. Sawalha said "we must hold ourselves accountable" and not blame the GOI for all Bedouin ailments.

6. (C) Leaving Rahat, Sawalha and econoff visited three unrecognized Bedouin villages, Al-Dhiyya, Um Al-Hiran, and Tel Al-Maleh. Sawalha showed three mosques that are under the threat of demolition (reftel). He said the GOI must respect the Bedouin because they are a part of Israeli society. Sawalha said demolition orders for the mosques still stand.

7. (U) Econoff ended his visit in the village of Lakia, where Naama Elsanna, one of the seven managers who operate the Association for Improvement of Women's Status, talked about the association, which was founded in 1992. She said 165 Bedouin women work at the center to improve the status and living conditions of Bedouin women. Several core projects were initiated to provide income and support: the Desert Embroidery project, created to provide income; an adult education program, designed to increase literacy; a kindergarten facility established to support working women; and, finally, a mobile library allocated to improve children's education.

8. (C) Elsanna told econoff that a recent arson attack that nearly destroyed the embroidery shop was committed by Bedouin men who felt threatened by progress and unable to handle the success of the Bedouin women. She said "jealousy" drove them to set fire to the shop, which the association has repaired.

Allegations of Corruption

9. (C) Iyad Rabi, General Director of the Ahali Center for Community Development in the Galilee, met with econoff on July 14. Rabi said there are Israeli Arabs who work with the GOI against the Israeli-Arab community. These individuals want power, money and an opportunity for self benefit, not

thinking about what they are doing to their own people, Rabi said. The GOI offers incentives for cooperation, which range from election support to certain business deals, said Rabi. He said that a climate of greed benefits only a few, primarily those who cooperate with the GOI, and this is the problem in the Galilee.

10. (C) Commenting on accountability, Rabi said there should be reporting requirements for Israeli-Arab community leaders and the GOI detailing of community expenditures. He said that there were budgetary problems in some local municipalities in the Galilee because certain elected officials regularly misuse public funds. Rabi said officials channel money towards businesses or organizations that will in turn provide political support.

11. (C) Rabi said NGO objectives and success can be measured by how they address community needs. Many NGO's are not helping the Israeli-Arab communities because they are focusing on their own agenda and budgetary requirements. He said some have turned NGO's into a money-making venture that guarantees them a steady salary.

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